



Contact: Charlotte Linton, Communications Manager | charlotte@childrensalliance.org | (206) 324-0340

Children's Alliance report identifies promising solutions to reduce youth behavioral crisis in Washington

Seattle, WA – June 29, 2023 – The number of young people experiencing anxiety and depression has been on the rise since before the COVID-19 pandemic and that figure has worsened in the past few years, according to a new report by Children's Alliance, Washington's statewide, nonpartisan child advocacy organization. Driven by a commitment to ensuring equitable access to quality care, the organization partnered with executive advisor Reid Saaris to spearhead a comprehensive assessment of the youth behavioral health landscape in the state, leading to the identification of critical gaps and the development of promising solutions.

Under the leadership of [Executive Director](#) Dr. Stephan Blanford, Children's Alliance convened a steering committee comprising prominent youth behavioral health experts in 2022. This committee embarked on an in-depth analysis to evaluate the existing challenges faced by young people in accessing adequate behavioral health care. The findings underscore the gravity of the crisis and the pressing need for immediate action.

Key findings from the committee's assessment include:

- Over half (58%) of Washington adolescents experience anxiety and/or depression.
- Approximately 114,000 out of 633,000 (~20%) Washington adolescents require clinical care for anxiety and depression.
- Multi-racial respondents exhibit the highest self-reported rates of anxiety and depression symptoms.
- Female-identifying and LGBTQ+ youth report symptoms of depression and anxiety at double the rate of their male-identifying and heterosexual counterparts, respectively. Non-binary youth experience depression or anxiety in 6 out of 7 cases.

Today, Children's Alliance published [Where can we find hope during the epidemic of hopelessness facing our children?](#), a comprehensive report that outlines the extent of the gaps in Washington's behavioral health care system. The report highlights barriers to care, incidence rates, care seeking challenges, provider availability, affordability, and care effectiveness. Furthermore, it presents a range of promising local and state solutions, projecting costs and outlining implementation timelines.

"We cannot ignore the undeniable behavioral health struggles faced by youth in Washington," emphasized Dr. Stephan Blanford. "The urgency to bridge the care gap and ensure all students receive the care they deserve cannot be overstated. Our report provides a roadmap to achieve

this, leveraging successful local initiatives and adopting multi-tiered systems of support approach."

Children's Alliance estimates that by expanding successful local initiatives, Washington can address the majority of its youth behavioral health care gap within a year or so, at an estimated cost of \$25 million. By incorporating best practices from these initiatives—like school and group-based care models—the state can significantly improve access to care for adolescents.

"Making meaningful progress in addressing the youth behavioral health crisis requires unwavering determination, collaboration, and perseverance," said Dr. Blanford. "Washington can build upon the dedication of local, state, and national leaders to develop a comprehensive system that provides the care our youth deserve. The implementation of these proposed solutions has the potential to create a brighter, more hopeful future for Washington's youth."

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ABOUT CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

[Children's Alliance](#) is Washington's statewide, nonpartisan child advocacy organization. We help people tap into their personal political power so they can advocate for change in their communities. We partner with families, lawmakers, community leaders, service providers and policy experts to develop antiracist policy solutions that improve the lives of Washington kids and build a better shared future for all.

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